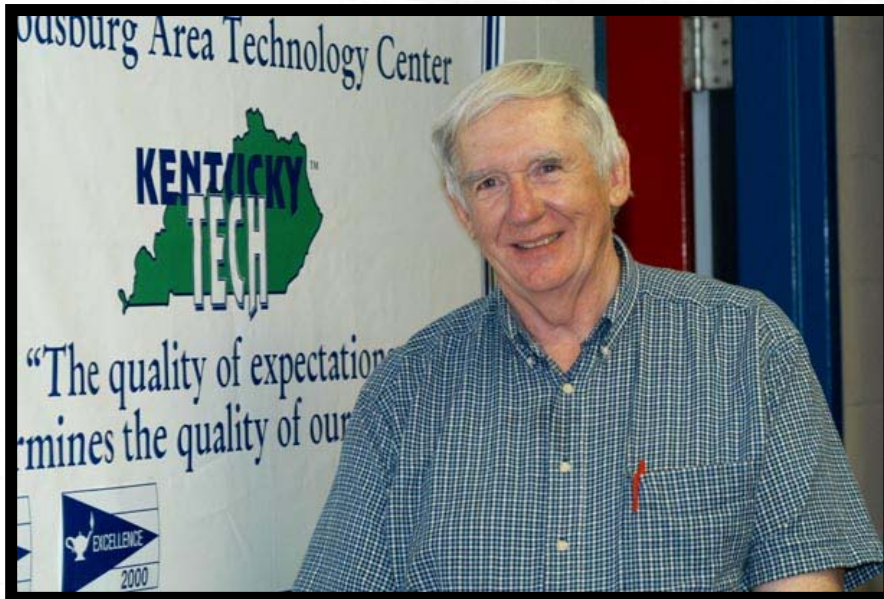


# Road to Retirement for Harrodsburg ATC's Hughes Jones Has Been Paved with 'Students Come First' Philosophy

When Hughes Jones began his career in education, he never dreamed he would become so heavily involved in vocational technical education. After all, he graduated from Georgetown College in 1965 with an English major and speech minor. Now, on July 31, 2004, he will retire from the KY Tech system of schools after being in education for 39 years and a vocational technical education principal for twenty-eight years.

"It's hard to stay anywhere long enough in this day and time to make an impact. We make an impact in our centers all over this state because we have people who love what they do, know who they are and for the most part - stay for the duration," says Hughes.

A life-long resident of Mercer Co., Hughes landed a job at the Harrodsburg Middle School upon graduation. There he taught English, reading, science and speech - quite the academician.



**"I love this business that we are in. It's really a mission in showing kids there's a life out there and that there is something for them to do in life."**



“To this day, I can still remember teaching science and I always enjoyed that course,” says Hughes.

While teaching at Harrodsburg, he spent summers completing education courses that were a part of a professional commitment he had made in order to receive teacher certification. In the summer of 1967, Hughes completed student teaching at Bryan Station High School in Lexington and married his hometown sweetheart, Jennie Lee Watts. In 1970, they both went to Eastern Kentucky University

so Hughes could work on a Masters in Educational Counseling. Hughes completed his Master’s degree program and started working on his Rank 1.

One of his counseling program classmates, Wayne Bowling, became a counselor at what used to be called the Central Kentucky Area Vocational School (AVS), Central Kentucky State Vocational Technical School (SVTS) and now called Central Kentucky Technical College.

“Wayne is the man who ultimately got me interested in vocational-technical education. One of our classes made a field trip to Central to see what Wayne's new job was all about. It provided me an avenue to discover Central Kentucky AVS and vocational education,” says Hughes. “I decided that school had the kind of vision and educational environment that would make for a good career; therefore, I left graduate school to start working at Central in January of 1972.”

In 1976, he became principal of the Harrodsburg Area Vocational Education Center (now Area Technology Center) at the urging of Mr. Bill Royalty, who was its previous principal. Since that time, he has touched many lives as principal and as part of the community. In the minds of many, he has become an icon of the school.



"I hope who ever replaces me as principal will make it a priority to be part of the community," says Hughes. "In my opinion, this is extremely important."

While many are appreciative of his contributions, none are more insightful than his faculty and staff.

"I'm not only losing my principal, I'm losing one of my best friends. He has a way of putting everything into perspective," says Health Science Instructor Vicki Long. "He lets you dream your dreams. This is a wonderful trait for a principal and I feel blessed to have worked for and with him."

From the perspective of a two-year newcomer, Health Science Instructor Patti Preston says, "I just finished my second year and I can honestly say that Mr. Jones has great patience with a new teacher."



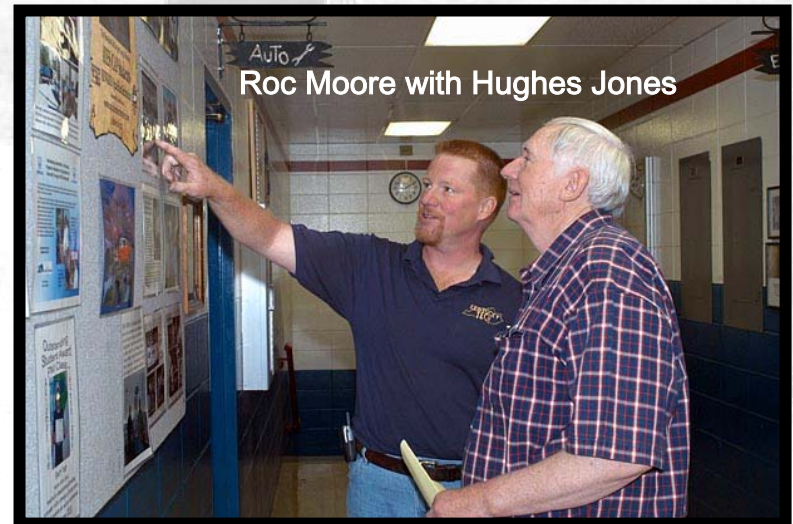
Jones receives exit physical by Patti Preston (at left) and Vicki Long.

Both teachers are united in their respect for their principal in how much of a big heart Hughes Jones has when it comes to kids, "We have had students who did not have the appropriate business clothing to go on an interview and Mr. Jones anonymously donated money to purchase clothes for those kids to wear. He has been a counselor, supporter, cheerleader, taxi cab driver and friend to many students. He is the epitome of a caring principal."

Judy Sutter, office technology instructor, also chimed in her support of Mr. Jones by saying, “He is one of the most positive individuals I know. To him, the glass is always half full and this type of thinking is needed when working with young people. He has loved his career choice and showed this to many students over the years. Not only did he wear the principal's hat but also wore one as friend, father, janitor, secretary and doctor.”

“The thing that I will remember most of all about Mr. Jones is that in all situations, he always makes decisions based on what's best for the students,” says Office Technology and Web Design Instructor Damian Layman. “Any time that I have gone to him looking for advice, his logic has always hinged not on money, bureaucracy, or making a good impression, but whether students will be positively or negatively affected. More than anything else, he reminds me that we're here to serve the student, and his leadership style emulates that philosophy.”

The “kids come first theme” is part of Hughes Jones and is also reflected in the comments from each of his teachers. Automotive Technology Instructor Roc Moore says, “Ever since I have known Mr. Jones it has always been about ‘what is best for these kids.’ This was something he always brought up when I would seek his counsel. From the years he spent on the board of directors of the Antioch Christian Camp to the decades he has give to the betterment of education, his mission has always been ‘what is best for these kids.’ He has influenced the lives of many people both young and old in a positive way and left his mark on this community. He will be missed at our center.”



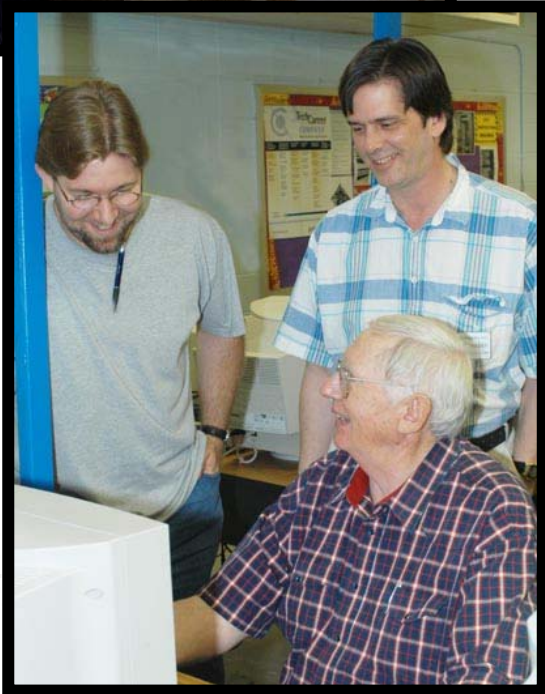




Over the years, Hughes Jones has provided the type of leadership where teachers and students were encouraged to become involved in community projects. While something can be said for each program area, one of the longest running projects has been the building of homes in Harrodsburg and Mercer Co. Beginning in 1977, a school advisory committee teamed up with the Builders Association of Mercer Co. to provide students with an opportunity to build new homes. Twenty-two homes have been built over the course of twenty-seven years.

“If you think about the dollars invested in these homes, I bet it is a sizeable amount of money; but if you think about the forty or more kids involved in the project each year, then we have touched many lives,” says Jones. “This and other community projects are common in area technology centers across the state because we all help our respective communities in some form or fashion. I think that locally we have more excitement now than in our earlier years. This is because we recognize our role. We aren’t headline grabbers, but we do a great job.”

During this past year, three ATC programs were involved in building a home – carpentry, electricity and information technology. Eddie Durr, the carpentry instructor, coordinated the project from start to finish.




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Top photo: Hughes Jones with electricity instructor and Carpentery Instructor Eddie Durr. Bottom photo: Web Design Instructor Damian Layman (left) and Information Technology Instructor Danny Wilder with Mr. Jones.

“Mr. Jones has given us the opportunity to become involved in this type of project,” says Durr. “The students have learned real world skills and can take great pride in something they have helped to build – it’s an invaluable experience.”

“I love this business that we are in,” says Hughes. It’s really a mission in showing kids there’s a life out there and that there is something for them to do in life.”

### Question and Answer Session with Hughes Jones

**Q:** What do you consider the most important legislation impacting vocational-technical education?

**Jones:** During the years when Carl D. Perkins was in congress, he was instrumental in passing the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. It was because of his power and control that we (Kentucky) received some of the largest amounts of various federal funding for vocational education. Some of the funding was used to build all these schools across the

state. As a direct result of the effect that Carl D. Perkins had in Washington, Kentucky has been in the upper crust in technical education nationwide. We need to keep our place.

**Q:** What do you consider the most important issue facing vocational technical education today?

**Jones:** I believe in dual credit, but I don’t think it should drive the teacher and curriculum to the extent that it limits the opportunities of those students who may



Hughes  
with wife  
Jennie

have had trouble with the traditional curriculum and are looking to technical education as a new chance to be successful. Many of the kids that come to us have poor study skills and habits. They may not read well or do math well. They are much younger than the typical post secondary student and have typical adolescent interests and motivations that hinder them from learning the curriculum as quickly as they will learn when they are older. The tech center is a wonderful place to explore their options, learn about interests and talents they may not have known earlier, and to develop self-esteem. The pressure on teachers to make every hour of the instructional time fit a task on the post secondary curriculum can cause teachers to overlook the other aspects of secondary technical education that are so crucial to their students' success. Some of our students who need the most help, how do they compete? We bring them in and encourage them to take the collegiate route. We should not expect a kid to compete at the collegiate level when he's not able because of poor prior academic success or immaturity. However, there are ways to humanize the courses in order for those kids to have a place in our school and learn something. What bothers me the most is - if we don't take care of these kids, what part of the education system will take care of them? I don't ever want us to forget our original mission. It's a tough assignment.

**Q:** What are the qualities that make a good principal?

**Jones:** You have to be able to counsel people because we have to fill so many roles. I think it's important to enjoy the people and the exercise. I have always tried to dream with my teachers. It's important to put wings on what they want to do because the kinds of people we hire are professionals in their respective fields. Many times, it is difficult for them to follow the long and winding road of bureaucracy because they are used to moving faster to get something done in the real world.

**Q:** What do you consider the positive influences that student organizations have on students?

**Jones:** We are pretty involved with student organizations because it motivates kids, gets the teachers excited and provides a wonderful potential for students to develop self-esteem,





Mr. Jones looking out the window of the newly completed house built over this past year by Harrodsburg ATC students.

leadership skills, and to learn how to excel. However, the greatest effect is that it allows the student to experience something they might not ever have been able to experience. You see attitudes change.

**Q:** What Guidance and or advice would you provide to a new principal within the system?

**Jones:** The former principal of this school, Bill Royalty, gave me a great piece of advice upon my arrival. He said Hughes – these folks can run this school without you. So, just get to know them over this first year. You are here to provide leadership. Always make decisions based on what's best for the student.

**Editor's Note:** We all thank you for your wonderful contributions to further vocational technical education. You have obviously made an impact on the lives of many students as well as those who have had the privilege of working with you. I too have had the opportunity of working with you over the years and can say amen to all the positive accolades.